

## The Woldingham Association



The Woldingham Association (WA) is an association of Woldingham's residents. It was created as a limited company on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1900 and shortly afterwards the Association had conveyed to it the ownership of many of the unadopted village roads. It was also given the benefit of covenants imposed on plot holders by the late William Gilford - which are still binding and enforceable today - when he laid out large parts of Woldingham as a high quality building estate from the late 1880's. For a long time the upkeep of private streets was organised by the Association but where applicable, this function has been taken over by the residents of unadopted roads.

Any resident of the village can join the Association - and is encouraged to do so. The central objective of the Association, defending local amenities, is as important today as it has always been. To that end the Association acts as a well respected medium for expressing local opinion at Parish, District, County and if need be Parliamentary levels, but is strictly non-political. The founders of the Association would have found it difficult to imagine the scope of the issues being considered today, but they would have recognised that their directive that "the Association should generally promote and protect the interests of the members in any matter of local or public interest" is still being pursued - and for a modest subscription.

William Gilford - a geologist from Redhill - was an 1880's visionary who bought the entire Woldingham Parish and laid out the roads we know today. He insisted that houses and outbuildings should be of a very high quality and character, that no plot should be less than ½ of an acre and all houses should be used strictly as private homes with no business or commercial associations. The growth of Woldingham from a few hundred inhabitants before the arrival of the railway in 1884 to around one thousand by 1914, was well ordered and protected by the associated covenants he imposed with the intention of preserving the distinctive spacious rural character of the village.

Although some of the larger houses were subdivided, and their cottages and outbuildings became separate houses with their own gardens, Woldingham has expanded without losing its charm and unique character, threatened though these features are by constant pressure to build on surrounding Green Belt, or to infill.

The WA has worked diligently and effectively to preserve the environment within which we live - while supporting sympathetic change - and will continue, to do so. By way of example, in 1984 the Forestry Commission put Great Church Wood (12.5 acres) up for sale and in 1986 it was acquired by the Woodland Trust with the help of £5000 raised in the Village. In 1992 the future of Marden Park Woods (155 acres) - then owned privately - was in doubt. Although there were protective deeds of covenant in place, there was concern as to how a new owner might use the woods. In response the W.A. sponsored a public meeting in 1993 and launched an appeal which seven months later had raised over £100,000. Uncertainty was removed in early 1994 when the Woodland Trust also acquired Marden Park Wood with this donation, in conjunction with contributions made by Surrey County Council and Natural England.



Because Woldingham is special, it will always need your protection from unsympathetic development and membership of the Association is a most effective way to secure it.

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Sir Nicholas Pevsner, when he was compiling his great book “The Buildings of England”, visited Woldingham and came to this conclusion:

**“This tiny downland hamlet has gradually become a very leafy suburb. The Parish is full of steep-sided valleys and the houses are hidden away in these, usually drowned in trees – an object lesson to the brutally expanded Warlingham next door”**

The “brutal expansion” might easily have spilled over into our leafy valleys had it not been for Green Belt legislation and the work of the Woldingham Association for over 100 years.

The Woldingham Village Appraisal highlights the fact that the longer residents stay here, the more they appreciate the sylvan surroundings and the special character of Woldingham. However, constant pressures continue to threaten and all residents should feel a responsibility to resist unsympathetic change and promote sensitive improvement, where necessary.



The village is fortunate that it now has two influential voices through the long standing Woldingham Association and the relatively recent Parish Council. However, while both work for the community, there are important differences. The PC is an important branch of elected local government with officers serving on rotation; by contrast the WA has been administering the Gilford Covenants for over 100 years and necessarily takes a long-term view. The WA has a wider geographical remit than the PC and addresses issues outside the village but which may have a negative impact on our community. The WA will continue to make representations concerning planning matters and will liaise with and assist external bodies such as the Woodland Trust, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and the National Trust.

In recent years the WA has represented the interests of Woldingham in many ways, including:

- assisting with the purchase of Church Wood and Marden Park Woods
- organising public meetings for residents to raise security issues with the Police & promoting the Neighbourhood Watch scheme
- working to enforce the Covenants which cover Woldingham
- scrutinising planning applications made to Tandridge DC and suggesting amendments or opposing where necessary, and making representation at appeals and public enquiries
- monitoring proposals for Biggin Hill & Redhill Aerodromes and M25 widening
- fighting the proposed re-routing of Oxted Quarry lorry traffic
- making representations in respect of the North of the Downs Plan & Local Government Commission Plans

The collective voice of the Woldingham Association is here for your benefit. The aim of the Association has always been **“to promote and protect the unique character of the village and preserve the surrounding Green Belt”** and is *strictly non-political*.

Membership is open to any resident and your participation is positively encouraged. The WA takes its position, in accordance with its charter, on behalf of residents of Woldingham. Points of view can be put forward at the Association’s Annual General Meeting or submitted for consideration at the regular meetings of the Council of the Association. Every resident who becomes a member can help to formulate our policy, join us in protecting our unique environment and strengthen our collective voice.

**Support the work of the Woldingham Association through your Membership.  
Simply complete the Membership Application Form and send it to the WA Treasurer.**